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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1330
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: ANTE UPPED IN NIGERIAN SENATE PRESIDENT BATTLE

REF: ABUJA 02231

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: New allegations have emerged that Senate President David Mark misappropriated 2.5 billion naira (USD 20 million) to procure furniture for the new Senate building from the 2007 Supplementary Budget, and that 500 million naira (USD 4 million) was paid to television stations for the live telecast of ministerial nominees in July. Press credited the revelations to Adoka Adaji, former Special Assistant on Media to then Governor George Akume, the same alleged source of the earlier home renovations accusations (reftel). Akume denies being involved in the matter and believes his former aide is similarly uninvolved. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriation Iyiola Omisore (PDP, Osun East) and Deputy Senate Leader Victor Ndoma-Egba (PDP Cross River Central) expressed their indignation that the charges were made in the press and ordered the Senate's Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions Committee to investigate the matter, just days after directing same to investigate the source and veracity of the home renovation allegations. Chairman Omisore laments that the allegations discredit the constitutional appropriation process and call into question the competence and honesty, not just of himself, but of the entire Senate.

13. (SBU) Through his counsel, Joe Ababgu, Senator Akume released a statement denying responsibility for the charges, and maintaining that Adaji is not behind them either. An anonymous Senator quoted in THISDAY paper said that "The (ultimate) plan is to nail Senator Akume who is believed to be looking for every avenue to bring Mark down. Once the committee gives Mark a clean bill of health, the Senate will pounce on Akume and may suspend him from the Senate for a long time for planning to bring the Senate to disrepute."

14. (C) COMMENT: Akume was well liked by his colleagues and probably would have won the Senate Presidency if not for the intervention of former President Obasanjo, who imposed David Mark on the Senate. This could be one way for Mark to rid himself of a popular rival and potential threat. Meanwhile, the Senate leadership seems more concerned about looking bad in the press than in seriously investigating a questionable outlay of state funds, aside from the matter of identifying the source of the allegations. END COMMENT.
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